THE

RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. II. March 20, 1936 Adar 26, 5696 No. 3.

EDITORIALS

MINIMUM JUSTICE FOR WOMEN

THE *He-Haluz* MOVEMENT

STILL THE STRATEGY OF FEAR AND PROTEST

THE JEW FACES ANTI-SEMITISM

II. POPULAR PANACEAS

by Milton Steinberg

THE NATURE OF JEWISH DISTINCTIVENESS

by Robert Gordis

Published by

THE SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM

15 West 86th Street, New York, N. Y.

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A "Substantial" Jew Speaks
Jews in Professions
Amend the Federation By-Laws
The Highest Level of Jewish Cooperation
A Program for Jewish Social Workers
Should Jews Be Socialists?

Palestine

Religious Conflict in Palestine
Rejoicing Over the Drawing of Water
Camel's Meat in Eretz Yisrael
Problem of Religion in Palestine
Menace of Land Speculation in Palestine
Language Conflict in Palestine

Zionism

Halting Between Two Opinions
Rabbis May Plead Guilty
Mizrahi Writes a Letter
The Nineteenth Zionist Congress
Place of Palestine in Jewish Life
The Organizational Problem in Zionism

The General Social Scene

League of Nations and International Crisis
Disarming Labor
The Pulpit and Social Issues
Revolution, Hail and Farewell
Praying for Peace
The "Yellow" Peril

Reconstructing Jewish Tradition

Nazism and the Jewish Doctrine of Election
Marxism and the Jewish Religion
Human Rights vs. Property Rights in Jewish Law
Meaning of Rosh Ha-Shanah for Our Day
The Pilgrimage Festivals
Note on the God Idea in Judaism
Religious Sanctions for the Sex Guidance of Modern Jewish Youth
Social Idealism in Jewish Life
The Revolt Against Reason

Jewish Education

Hebrew in the Public High Schools
A Quarter Century of Educational Leadership
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Is Religious Training Essential to Character?

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The RECONSTRUCTIONIST is published bi-weekly for twenty consecutive issues starting in October, by The Society for the Advancement of Judaism, 15 West 86th St., New York, N. Y. Subscription $1.00 a year; foreign $1.25; individual copy 10 cents. Entered as second class matter January 9, 1935, at the Post Office, New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.
The editorials represent the opinions of the editors only.

EDITORIALS

Minimum Justice for Women

THE average American has until recently evinced no great interest in politics. Unlike the citizens of many European countries, the people of this land have been conscious of national affairs only at election time, and even then, the issues have concerned them less than the personalities involved in the campaigns. During the last few years, however, a change seems to have come about. The crises in the American economic structure have turned all eyes to a consideration of basic problems; and the press, reflecting this aroused interest, prints speeches and reports verbatim, which, previously, they might have merely reported in a general way.

The same kind of awakened interest on the part of our population can be observed also in relation to the problems of social justice, problems which go more deeply into the whole question of human relations and which underly the transitory events of political life. Decisions rendered by the courts of the land, though complicated and often highly technical, are read and analyzed by the layman and lead him to ponder the problems of justice. This is a good thing, not only because it helps him to become more intelligent about the forces that shape his life, but also because it focuses his attention upon the ethical principles involved in the institutions and practices of American life. Justice, like all ethical principles, cannot but remain a vague abstraction, contemplated in a void, unless it is observed in relation to specific situations, and applied in concrete cases.

Those who have followed the decisions handed down by the Supreme Court during the past year have therefore come to have a keener sensitivity to the shocking circumstance that the present structure of the economic life holds out little promise that basic human rights can be achieved for each human being. The discouraging conclusion seems inevitable that our present system is irremediable.

It is true that the Constitution guarantees these rights, but as Prof. Morris Cohen points out in his introduction to a book called "Lawless Judges" by Goldberg and Levenson, the "vague phrases of the Constitution about 'due process,' the 'equal protection of the law,' and 'regulating interstate commerce' . . . are blank checks which the judge fills in in accordance with his personal opinion." And unfortunately, the personal opinion of the judge is often colored by a class bias. The most progressive legislation can be, and has been, voided by the prejudices of men whose economic orientation is reactionary. This situation has rendered it impossible thus far to put into effect even so very humane a measure as the Minimum Wage law for women. Working women are at the mercy of "purely personal views of what is just or unjust."

Only a week or so ago the same issue was brought before the Court of Appeals in New York, and by a vote of four to three, the court declared unconstitutional a state law providing minimum wages for women. Once again our hopes have been dashed that poor women's rights might be protected. Of course the Constitution says that "freedom of contract is to be preserved; but any honest person must concede that a woman who must either work or starve has no freedom of contract. She must accept the wage she is offered; she has no choice. If the state does not protect her rights, no one else will.

If it is not possible, therefore, within our present framework, to prevent employers of a factory from paying women as low as $6.00 a week, it is certainly inconceivable that our highest aspirations for secure and dignified living can be realized. So long as the competitive system prevails, the pressure of employers will prevail; and even if, on the wave of a national cataclysm, forward-looking legislation is swept in, the judges will render it null and void in "the calm atmosphere of the courts."

We have been asked by many people whether it is necessary to believe in the abolition of the profit system in order to belong to the *Reconstructionist* movement. We ask in return: in view of the above facts, can Jews ever hope to live ethical lives, if Judaism does not impel them to contribute their share toward replacing this unjust order of society with one more just? We have given this problem long and serious thought, and we have not been able to discover in our competitive system sufficient evidence that it can cure itself of its ills. The few "lie upon ivory couches, and stretch themselves out upon divans and eat lambs from the flock . . . and anoint themselves with fine oil." But factory girls cannot be guaranteed a minimum wage because it is unconstitutional. If Jews are to be serious about reconstructing their life as Jews, about reviving their culture and recreating their tradition, they must needs make the emancipation from the shackles of economic insecurity and the fretfulness of an uncertain existence an integral part of their efforts at reconstruction. To ignore the problem of economic justice in the reconstruction of Jewish life is like ignoring the foundation in rebuilding a home which has been made uninhabitable by earthquake and flood.

The *He-Haluz* Movement

WHAT is going to happen to all the young men and women who today are attending high schools and colleges, and tomorrow will be seeking employment? What will they do; where will they go? This is the problem which is plaguing thousands of students, and transforming their "best years" into years of anguished hopelessness. Jewish young people, in particular, face the future with profound misgivings. If there are few, if any, opportunities for those who are now entering the arena of active life, anti-Jewish discrimination has drastically reduced their number for Jews.

There is a growing group among those who concern themselves with this problem who believe that Jews might solve it by occupational redistribution. It is generally recognized that Jews overcrowd a few professions and trades to the neglect of many others in which Jews are rarely found. Last year, Dr. I. M. Rubinow called attention to this fact. Unfortunately, there are no agencies which can effect this necessary redistribution. But even if there were, it would be useless for Jews to train themselves for any other professions or occupations. Instead of having unemployed doctors and lawyers and salesmen, etc., we should only have unemployed brick-layers, and carpenters and mechanics.

Attention was again focused upon this entire question recently when the League for Labor Palestine called a conference in New York City to discuss the "pro-

ductivization" of Jewish youth. About sixty men and women attended, representing rabbis, educators, social workers and Center executives. Out of this conference emerged, we believe, one significant idea: the need for encouraging and supporting the *he-Haluz* movement in the United States. Though far from being a solution for the masses of Jewish young people, this idea has the merit of showing a way out at least to those who are inclined to seek their salvation in Palestine.

He-Haluz is not a new thing in Europe; in this country it is scarcely known. It is an organization for the preparation of young people who wish to settle in Palestine. It provides a period of education in the language, the history, the geography, the economic and social aspects of Palestine, and then proceeds to place the students on *haksharah* farms (preparatory training farms). On these farms, they are trained to live cooperatively, on the soil, exactly as they will be expected to live when they settle in the collectives in Palestine. In eastern Europe and in Germany today, tens of thousands of young people are to be found on these farms, preparing for migration. In America, there are three such farms, with about 100 members already working them. In the whole *he-Haluz* movement in this country there are about 500 young Jews.

This is a constructive piece of work which merits the support of American Jews. *He-Haluz,* with its *haksharah,* spells hope and a future for these hundreds. Surely there must be hundreds, if not thousands, of others who would find in Palestine the way out of their present quandary.

For Palestine, too, an enlarged *he-Haluz* movement in this country would be a boon. Immigration into Palestine today is not, and cannot afford to be, selective on the basis of Zionist interest and love for Palestine; it is selective on the basis of sheer physical need. As a result, the whole cultural renaissance in Eretz Yisrael is jeopardized. Prof. Hugo Bergmann writes in the *Jewish Frontier,* that the new immigrants assume a haughty attitude toward Hebrew culture. They come to Palestine as to Albania, as to any place of refuge, loyal to their native culture, disdainful of Hebraic culture, and determined to resist their assimilation into the national life of the land.

This is indeed a serious matter. We are on the point of losing sight of one of the basic elements in the ideology of Zionism: the rebirth of our language and our culture. What Palestine needs today is a fresh influx of young people imbued with the zeal for Jewishness which characterized the early *aliyot.* We have young people who are turning their eyes to Palestine. Their need is great, indeed; but not so great that they cannot afford to undergo a thorough training in preparation for the land. American Jews have here the opportunity of performing two mighty *mizvot*: of providing a hopeful future for hundreds of young Jews, and of providing an antidote against the forces that threaten the progress of Hebrew culture in Palestine.

Still The Strategy of Fear and Protest

DESPITE repeated declarations to the contrary, it appears that the American Jewish Congress persists in a strategy for Jewish defense which focuses itself on fear and protest rather than on building the more permanent foundations upon which Jewish life in America can be sustained. The Congress Bulletin headlines support this strategy. Recently the Congress arranged an exhibit of anti-Jewish propaganda, Nazi literature, and other evidences of Jew-hatred to be found in the United States and Europe. The exhibit was open to the public in the quarters of the Grand Street Boys, for five days, beginning March 9th. It cannot be denied that the scores of anti-Jewish organizations operating in America, with their numerous incendiary publications,

present a menace to Jewish security in our country.

It may be necessary at times to prod Jewish indifference into a realization of the havoc that our people are suffering, much as the little donkeys in Palestine are given a jab in the ribs to cure their natural reluctance to move on. But Jews and Jewish life cannot go forward simply through perpetuating an organization for administering intermittent jabs in the ribs of indifferent American Jews. The truly invulnerable defense of Jews against their foes is not a panicky fear of "How soon will it happen here!", graphically stimulated by an exhibit, but a rebuilding of the communal solidarity of Jewish life through a sane and effective program that will intensify and enrich Jewish living.

What has become of the American Jewish Congress' plans for stimulating Jewish education, for fostering community coordination, and other planks in a program of inner construction of Jewish life? This would be the positive and ultimately the most effective approach to constructive Jewish unity. Even the upbuilding of Palestine seems today to draw solely upon the appeal of refuge and escape from Jew-hatred. Bigotry and poisonous animus must have its lull sooner or later. What then? Do we not run the grave risk that this flare of Jewish sentiment which anti-Semitism is fanning into a zealous flame today will settle down into smouldering ashes just as soon as dispatches of Nazi outrages cease to disturb us or have subsided? Jewish loyalty and Jewish self-realization cannot be preserved for long by a strategy of fear and of protest alone.

Jewish life in America must be sustained by a more solid diet than continuous intervenous injections which at best can prolong mere existence through an emergency. It is most unsound to concern ourselves *only* with the emergency. Even in the thick of the crisis we must build this inner strength of Israel. In the very face of a rising tide of Jew-hatred, we must avoid morbid appeals of parading our humiliation and reconstruct the agencies and measures that will insure purpose and plan in our life as Jews.

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The Jew Faces Anti-Semitism *

II. POPULAR PANACEAS

By MILTON STEINBERG

INTRODUCTION

THE problem of anti-Semitism which confronts the Jews of the western world has two aspects, that of mitigating such prejudices as already exist and of forestalling its unfortunate consequences in the Jewish personality. How does American Jewry propose to defend itself? To what strategy does it mean to resort in the effort to ease itself from such anti-Semitism as exists at present and to preserve itself against encroachments in the future?

Strictly speaking, there is no American Jewry, in the sense of an organized and integrated community possessed of organs for the expression of its will. There are only individual American Jews, four million of them, without any organization which can speak authoritatively for or to them. There is among them nothing akin to a Vatican, no official hierarchy to determine policies, no universally recognized leadership, no high command to direct their resistance against a potential enemy

*The second of a series of three articles. The concluding article will appear in the next issue.

infinitely stronger than they in numbers and equipment. And yet passivity is intolerable. Each Jew then must act for and by himself or, what is little better, through loose, voluntary associations of like-minded individuals. He must use his best judgment as to strategy, making a purely individual choice between the various and contradictory programs which have been suggested to him.

As a result, Jewish ranks are plagued with confusion and conflicting counsels. The air is filled with proposals and counter-proposals, with the din of wrangling and argument. The American Jewish scene is a tangle of individuals, of groups and of parties, each advocating its own program. And almost every Jew has his pet opinion on the subject.

Out of this welter of confused debate, a number of programs have emerged, each of which has its own group of advocates. This article will describe and evaluate first the programs of the masses of unreflecting Jews. Later, we shall turn to those tactics which represent the results of careful study and sober analysis. In judging both groups of programs, we shall use two obvious criteria of criticism—first, their potential efficacy as solvents of the problems to which they are addressed; second, their effects, if put into practice, on the Jews themselves. For, as we have seen in the article which preceded this one, the issue of Jewish morale is no trivial one. Jews can offer too high a price for physical security. For them, as for all human beings, there is little wisdom in seeking to gain the world at the cost of their souls.

I

Imagine an individual who is threatened with attack by a group too strong to be met in pitched battle. There are, it would seem, only three courses open to him. He can run to cover, hoping that by making himself inconspicuous, he shall escape hostile attention. He may undertake to avoid provoking his opponents, so that they shall find no pretext to set themselves upon him. Or, last of all, he may attempt to disguise himself so that his enemies will come to regard him as one of their own. This hypothetical situation explains the strategies which immediately suggest themselves to many Jews.

Thus it is widely argued in Jewish circles that the Jew has made himself too conspicuous in a world which is not his own. There are in America prominent Jewish bankers, manufacturers, authors, physicians, dramatists, lawyers and what-not. In fact, it seems at first glance as though there were scarcely a field of human endeavor in which one or more Jews have not attained an outstanding position. There was a time when Jews were pleased with the success of their fellows, when they felt that it reflected creditably on the group as a whole. Then they hailed with joy the literary achievement of their authors, the contributions of their scientists, and the fame of their famous men generally. More recently, they have become uneasy about it all. They tend to feel that conspicuous attainments serve nowadays to rouse the resentment of less successful non-Jews. As they see it, the greater the number of Jews who climb high and the higher they climb, the more noticeable they become, the more inviting a target they present. It has, in fact, become almost a Jewish folk dogma that anti-Semitism is mainly a matter of Christian jealousy.

The truth of the matter is, that Jews have been by no means so uniformly successful as is commonly supposed. The most that can be said truthfully is that some Jews have done very well in some fields, and moderately well in others. There are many areas often of great economic and social importance into which Jews have not penetrated at all. Moreover, the great masses of Jews, as any visit to a ghetto will demonstrate, are no better off than the great masses of men generally. The advocates of the policy of running to cover are well aware of these facts. They disregard them on the grounds that it is not the facts which matter, but the Gentile idea of what the facts are.

Let us disregard for the moment the

issue of the facts of the case. Granted this analysis, the question remains what can be done about it? It is at this point that the folk program which advocates inconspicuousness breaks down completely, revealing itself to be no program at all. For, in fact, there is nothing which Jews can do about whatever Jewish success exists. Even if Jewry possessed organization and discipline, there would still be no means by which it could prevent a Jewish high school student from capturing honors, a scientist from making his discoveries, a musician from playing well, an author from writing a good book, or a merchant from conducting his business efficiently.

There is, however, one field of activity on which the protagonists of self-concealment concentrate. It is here that they are most likely to win wide support. They insist that, beyond all else, Jews should not accept high public office. However flattering they may have found it in the past to see one of their number appointed or elected to a position of public trust, they now feel that the person who accepts such elevation jeopardizes the welfare of the group. For no one is so conspicuous as the person in public life. No one presents so easy a target for invidious attack and no one invites jealousy so largely. Only one who knows how uncomfortable large groups of Jews have been in recent years at the election of Jews to governorships, at their appointment to the Supreme Court or the Cabinet—only he can relish to the full the absurdity of the accusation that Jewry has formed a cabal to seize the machinery of American government.

The question whether Jews shall withhold themselves from American public life is the test case of the whole program under discussion. To be sure, there is nothing which Jewry collectively can do to keep Jews individually from holding office. But even if the Jewish group possessed such a measure of control over its members, the policy recommended would still be without merit. It is, in the first place, a tactic of suicide. For, if it be once granted that in self-protection Jews should withdraw from politics, then by the same logic they should retreat from all fields in which they have exhibited special abilities.

The Jewish governor of some state is doubtless in a conspicuous position, one which is likely to arouse Gentile jealousy. But though to a lesser degree, so too is the Jewish banker, clothing manufacturer or physician. Nor is it entirely correct to say that a vast difference of degree separates the two instances. A Gentile walking down the main street of some American city is likely to be little conscious of the Jewishness of judges of the Supreme Court of the United States. He cannot help but observe the character of the names over the door of some successful department store. In brief, the policy of inconspicuousness would, if followed to its last logical consequences, imply a full renunciation of all forms of desirable activity. It would leave the Jew with nothing.

The alleged inconspicuousness of Jews in radical movements is regarded as another cause of anti-Jewish prejudice. It is argued that the Jew is a communist, a revolutionary, that he voices his opinion noisily, that Gentiles become conscious of the Jew as a disturbing element in communal life, and that anti-Semitism is born as a result. The protagonists of concealment therefore argue that the Jew has no right to radicalism, that he must not maintain positions which are regarded with disfavor by the Gentile majority. Let the Jew abandon his communism, say these theorizers, and much of anti-Semitism will disappear.

In the first place, it is obviously not true that most Jews are radicals. Quite the reverse. As a group American Jews are likely to be decidedly conservative and for very definite reasons. To them America in contrast with the lands from which they emigrated is a place of Jewish opportunity. It is still a *goldene medineh*. Besides, Jews as members of a minority group are likely to be deterred from radicalism by the feeling that it is ungracious for a guest minority to dictate to their hosts how they are to conduct the affairs of the land. The

very insecurity which Jews feel discourages radical tendencies in them. But above all, Jews are essentially bourgeoisie, possessing the ambitions and the interests of the middle class. Without applauding or deprecating the fact, the fact does remain that Jews as a whole are not radicals. It is an interesting indication of successful indoctrination of Jews of anti-Semitic propaganda that Jews themselves so often subscribe to the theory of the general radicalism of Jews.

But even if one were to grant that Jews have a disproportionate number of radicals, what program would emerge? Has the Jewish group any means of compelling a radical member to abandon his position? If, after all, a human being is sufficiently convinced of a revolutionary attitude to defy society generally, he will not hesitate to flout the authority of the Jewish group. Has Jewry the right to ask the Jewish individual to traduce his own inner convictions for the sake of security? Has it that right on universal moral grounds? Once again, in this very specific instance the popular panacea reveals itself to be mistaken in its assumption of fact, impossible of execution and ethically indefensible.

There is, then, little which can be said for the strategy of avoiding attack through self-concealment.

II

The second popular alternative is that the Jew behave so as to avoid irritating potential and actual anti-Semitism. Essentially, this alternative amounts to the correction of Jewish manners. Gentiles sometimes assert that Jews are obnoxious socially. That assertion is well known to Jews. In addition, with Jewish sensibilities sharpened by hostility, Jews watch each other very closely. It is natural then that some Jews point to Jewish conduct as the cause of anti-Semitism. Jews, these analysts assert, are crude, brash, noisy and vulgar. They argue with headwaiters and ushers, they overdress, they raise their voices in public. The Gentile observes with distaste and becomes an anti-Semite. Granted this analysis of the causes of anti-Semitism, there can be only one procedure for Jews. They must acquire impeccable manners. Once their etiquette is beyond reproach, their problem will be solved. The Gentile, no longer annoyed by exhibitions of vulgarity, soothed now by the smooth, easy graces of the refashioned Jew, will decide that Jews are decent, well-behaved human beings who deserve a return of every courtesy which they exhibit.

This, then, is the doctrine of Jewish salvation according to the revelation of Emily Post and an unspeakably ingenuous doctrine it is. Aside from the fact that the whole analysis operates in the realm of superficialities, it leads to a perfectly fantastic program for group action. Jewry, apparently, must organize itself into a school of etiquette. The difficulties inherent in that scheme are obvious as soon as one considers that no Jew will admit that his are the bad manners. Who then shall be the pupils and who the teachers? Besides, it is really an open question as to whether the conduct of Jews is, as a whole, worse than the conduct of Gentiles. There are poorly bred individuals in all groups. There is no way of determining their relative proportions. The majority of American Jews are products of a cultural strain different from the Anglo-Saxon. What may in them appear as breaches of the amenities may be less a matter of bad manners than different manners. Certainly, with the passage of time, as the Jew lives on the American scene, he acquires spontaneously, automatically and without formal instruction habits of conduct which are indistinguishable from those of Gentiles. Last of all, it is unrealistic—this dancing school philosophy for coping with anti-Semitism. It does not recognize the lesson of Germany. German Jewry was as urbane, polished, well-behaved and cultured a group as one will find anywhere. Its social graces made no difference to the persecutor.

III

The last of these popular programs is that of deliberate disguise. It is a course which involves changing labels and uniforms, a sort of mass turn-coating. It de-

mands that the Jew become so much like the Gentile that the latter shall mistakenly regard him as a fellow-Gentile. Like its two fellow programs, this one springs from a philosophy of anti-Semitism. It finds the causes of the hostility to Jews in the fact that Jews are different. Their names are unusual, their modes of eating and worship vary greatly from those of the predominant group. They maintain special associations for their philanthropies and their social activities. They associate largely with one another and marry within their own group. In brief, they are a group apart. Since men always are disturbed by the presence of the unusual, they resent naturally the unlikeness of Jews. This is the analysis. From it springs a program of action. Jews must cease to be disturbingly different. They must strip themselves of those characteristics which are distinctively Jewish.

Not all the advocates of this procedure agree as to how far the Jew must remake himself. There are those who feel that it will be sufficient merely to remove outward and flagrantly obvious differentiae; others, on the other hand, demand that the Jew denude himself completely of his Jewish garb and outfit himself from head to foot with the dress of the Gentile. The program then ranges in scope from one of changing names and habits of living all the way to complete assimilation through intermarriage and the wilful dissolution of all Jewish bonds. There are, of course, many Jews who have Anglicized their names, abandoned traditional Jewish practices, remade their modes of living in accordance with Gentile patterns. Some have gone further, they have attempted to pass as authentic Gentiles, or have deliberately sought escape through formal religious conversion into Christianity. This program of self-dejudaization is then no novelty. It has been followed unconsciously for over a century by Jews who have imitated Gentiles with that spontaneity with which minorities generally emulate enveloping majorities. It has been pursued deliberately by Jews who, plagued with a sense of Jewish inferiority, have sought to insinuate themselves into Gentile society. But, only recently, has it been offered as a prophylactic against anti-Semitism.

As such, it is, of course, scarcely effective. It is, in the first place, extremely difficult of execution. Jewishness is a vague quality. To eradicate it involves both a transference of loyalties and a remaking in detail of the entire periphery of one's personality. For some Jews such an effort is hopeless before it is made. Furthermore, it is very doubtful that the Gentile approves of dejudaized Jews at all. It is highly probable that he is much more at ease with the Jew who is what he is undisguisedly, than with the one who is trying to appear what he is not. With the former, he knows with whom he is dealing. On the other hand, the most tolerant Gentile is likely to be uncomfortable with the Jew who seems to be disguising himself all the time. Nothing is better calculated to arouse suspicion than the least sugggestion of disingenuousness. This program of dejudaization is dealt the *coup de grace* when one considers Hitlerite Germany. If for no other reason, the strategy of dejudaization stands condemned by virtue of its failure there.

IV

We have spoken so far only of the weakness of the popular programs. There are, in addition, two criticisms which apply to all three alike and which are more fundamental than any stated heretofore. Each addresses itself to some secondary cause of anti-Semitism rather than to its roots. It must be remembered that these are techniques of shock, policies born of bewilderment. Those who advocate them have been guilty of a failure to analyze their problem through. They have, as people so often do in an emergency, seized upon irrelevant factors, they have expanded partial truths into universal doctrines of salvation. It is important then that we digress for a moment into an examination of the actual and fundamental causations of anti-Semitism. Only thus will we re-

veal the stupidity of what to most Jews seem the obvious tactics to adopt. Incidentally, this brief excursion will equip us with the tools for judging the more sober suggestions to which we shall turn shortly.

It should be immediately apparent that anti-Semitism, as a phenomenon which has persisted for two thousand years under the most diverse circumstances and in varied lands, must be motivated by factors of deeper significance than the table manners or the professional success of some individual Jews. As a matter of fact, anti-Semitism has always been fed from three distinct sources. The first of these is a matter of social tradition. For many centuries each generation of Gentiles has received as a heritage from its past a prejudice against Jews. In this particular, the church, especially the medieval church, has played a sorry role. It has taught its communicants to regard Jews as a race of deicides, as those who rejected, tortured and slew the savior of mankind. There are some churches of every sect and communion which, in their religious instructions, still teach anti-Semitism by indirection. The result is that over a long period of time, an animosity against Jews has been created which is transmitted from generation to generation. The Christian child is often prejudiced against Jews before he has actually met one. Nor, at present, is this attitude confined to members of churches. Habits of thinking persist in individuals long after they have been separated from the teachers of those habits. Many a Gentile who maintains no church affiliation, whose parents maintained none before him—is still a recipient of a prejudice born of religion. As the unchurched often inherit the ethics and ideals of organized religion, so are they likely to acquire its animosities.

This heirloom of hatred is by no means the product of religion alone. In every age, economic conflict has been a powerful incentive to anti-Semitism. Medieval Gentiles competing for a livelihood against their Jewish contemporaries naturally evolved resentments which have persisted long after their causes were dissolved. The anti-Semitism of many a modern anti-Semite is the lingering echo of the fact that his ancestors failed to meet successfully the competition of Jews long dead. More potent than yesterday's struggles in molding folk attitudes are today's. In a competitive economy, each man lives only through outdoing his fellow. Granted such a system, and group hatreds are inevitable. So long as its own needs are satisfied, the majority may view with equanimity the prosperity of minorities. But where there is not enough to go around, then those who control an economy are likely to resent the presence of outsiders at the common meagre table. It is no accident that anti-Semitism particularly and intolerance toward minority groups generally grow intense during economic depressions. Then the job held by the Jew, Negro or Catholic is one taken from someone else, then the bread which these tolerated outsiders eat seems desirable to those who belong but who are hungry.

The prejudices born of material adversity are not entirely a spontaneous growth. They are often nurtured by those who seek to divert popular attention from other issues. This device of encouraging group prejudices for special ends is no novelty. It is as old as the Roman dictum, divide and conquer. By playing up the Jewish problem, the Czarist regime in Russia sought to distract the Russian masses from a concern with basic political and economic problems. It is notorious that the anti-Semitism of Nazi Germany was in its inception and in its practice today a racial red herring—and an effective one. For when Germans are busy breaking Jewish heads they cannot be engaged in expropriating German capitalists. It is a safe guess that whenever the National Socialist Party intensifies its campaign against Jews, all is not well in the Third Reich. As fascisms fan normal patriotisms into chauvinisms in order to protect special economic interests, so they blow inherited antagonisms against the Jew into roaring flames and for the same reasons.

Underlying both the religious and eco-

nomic motivations is a third—of a psychological character. There is in all man a natural tendency to resent that which is different and unusual. In part, that resentment is a heritage from the jungle, where every strange phenomenon represented a potential danger. In part, it represents man's rebellion against the discomfort of dealing with that to which he is not accustomed. And, because the Jew is different in his heredity and background, because he is not one of the majority, those who compose the majority are uneasy in his presence, suspicious and hostile to him. They feel a sense of constraint, they cannot treat him as casually nor as naturally as they treat one another. They resent him as surely as members of a family resent the intrusion of an outsider who calls for special attention, effort and methods of approach.

In addition, it should be observed that all human beings at some time or other feel the temptation to escape from harsh realities by hysterical flights. When the world becomes too much for an individual or for a society, they are likely to turn to some defenseless and blameless object, personality or group and use that as the butt of pent-up resentment and fury. The Jewish minority together with all other minorities is therefore an ever-present potential victim of hysteria. It must expect attack whenever general human suffering becomes too great to be born and when in consequence the need for a frenzied outlet becomes acute.

V

These are the basic causes of anti-Semitism: transmitted prejudice, economic competition and psychological discomfort. Once these have been stated, the naivete of the programs which we have described becomes manifest. The fact that some Jews are conspicuous, or that others are unmannerly has little to do with the prejudices of the anti-Semite. If a particular Gentile were not an anti-Semite to begin with he would not observe that it was a Jew who had done so well for himself or who was overdressed. He would see only a successful or distasteful human being. The anti-Semitism is there to begin with—and for other and deeper reasons. The arguments about Jewish cleverness, ambition, vulgarity and clannishness are only rationalizations. To be sure, as such they serve to support and encourage prejudice. The Gentile who is biased because of a Sunday school lesson long forgotten, because of a stray remark uttered by his parents about Jews, because of unadmitted bitterness over the fact that a Jew holds a job which he would like, because of a vague, inarticulate discomfort in their presence, or because he has been poisoned by anti-Semitic propaganda—that Gentile seizes upon each exhibition of Jewish achievement, discourtesy or immorality as the actual cause of his attitude, when in reality it is only a pretext, a secondary and derived factor. The idea that anti-Semitism can be combatted by making the Jew unexceptionable to the anti-Semite suggests the story in Aesop about the wolf and the lamb on the brink of the river. For Jews to concern themselves seriously with such solutions is to treat the symptoms and not the disease itself.

The techniques born of Jewish bewilderment fail then to meet the first test which must be applied to any policy which proposes to meet the problem of anti-Semitism. They are flagrantly inadequate and misdirected. They are objectionable also on the basis of the second criterion of judgment which we set up for ourselves, —that of their effect on the Jews themselves. Nothing could be better calculated to destroy Jewish self-respect than the execution of these programs. To tell a persecuted group that it must be unfailingly circumspect, that it must move only under cover, that it must never be free or natural in seeking fulfillment of its desires is to ask innocent people to live in the manner of criminals. No group can long preserve its morale if it can purchase security only by slinking along bypaths and alleys. The very assertion that Jewish manners must be remade deliberately is equally demoralizing. It proceeds from the assumption that Jews as they are, are

undesirable. It encourages an unhealthy self-examination and an anxious scrutiny of the behavior of one's fellows. It means that Jews will be unable to live naturally. Nor can Jews be expected to maintain a wholesome regard for themselves if they are once convinced that Jewishness is something unpleasant, something to be toned down, suppressed and sloughed. This perhaps is the worst of the three suggestions from the point of view of psychology. It breeds a sense of shame and resentment against one's own identity. If modern psychology has taught mankind anything it is this, that a healthy and happy psychic life requires a joyous acceptance of self, and a life of free, unrestrained self-fulfillment.

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The Nature of Jewish Distinctiveness

By Robert Gordis*

I

IN discussing the recently published anthology of Jewish thought, "Rebirth," Rabbi Ira Eisenstein lays bare with consummate clarity the weak foundations upon which Mr. Ludwig Lewisohn has reared his philosophy of Judaism. Mr. Lewisohn is firmly convinced of the mystic unity of the Jewish people which expresses itself in an unchanging attitude toward life, and which is transmitted in the Jewish blood stream. The Jew may seek to ignore or suppress his Jewish impulses, but his attempt is doomed to failure. The philosophical and moral aptitudes that have come to him as a biological inheritance stamp him inescapably as a Jew and set him eternally apart from the Gentile who has inherited a radically different set of impulses and attitudes.

This in brief is Mr. Lewisohn's position, which he has elaborated with all the persuasiveness and eloquence at his command. If his rationale of Jewish survival is weak, he will be unable to win the loyalty of countless intelligent Jews for the Jewish cause. Rabbi Eisenstein has therefore performed a valuable function in pointing out that such a doctrine is scientifically untrue and practically dangerous. The notion of a cultural inheritance transmitted in the blood stream is negated by biology; the dictum of a changeless identity in the Jewish spirit is disproved by history; and the doctrine of biologically differentiated races runs counter to sociology. To insist that an impassable gulf separates Jew and non-Jew plays directly into the hands of the Nazis and other adherents of pseudo-scientific race theories. It can only result in a deep pessimism for the overwhelming majority of Jews who must continue to live outside of Palestine among a non-Jewish majority.

It may be added that Mr. Lewisohn's viewpoint was given an even more blatant expression several years ago by Mr. Maurice Samuel in his book "You Gentiles." Both Mr. Lewisohn and Mr. Samuel have incurred the penalty of all strongly conscious Jews, whose Jewish philosophy consists only of Zionism and who have never articulated a program for Jewish life in the diaspora. Their profound Jewish loyalty lacks roots in the realities of Jewish life—it must perforce take refuge in what may well be called a mystical chauvinism.

II

Rabbi Eisenstein's criticism is thoroughly justified, but it fails to disclose the elements of validity in Mr. Lewisohn's viewpoint. There are forms of error that are more vital than the truth, not because they are false, but because they contain the seeds of future truth. These only a sympathetic criticism can reveal. Prof. Kaplan has given a striking illustration

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of this method in his paper *"The Place of Dogma in Judaism,"* now available in his latest volume "Judaism in Transition." A century and a half ago, Mendelssohn had declared that Judaism had no dogmas. That statement was challenged by many gifted scholars who demonstrated that traditional Judaism does possess a body of fundamental beliefs. In his essay, Dr. Kaplan admits that Mendelssohn was historically incorrect, but he suggests that Mendelssohn was struggling to evolve an approach for the future, rather than give a retrospect of the past.

In a somewhat similar sense, Mr. Lewisohn is incorrect in what he says, but there is value in what he implies. In other words, he is grappling with phenomena which he misconstrues, but which exist nevertheless, and deserve to be reckoned with. After disputing the attempt to give Jewish distinctiveness a mystic-biological basis, Rabbi Eisenstein says:

"The crux of the fallacy in Mr. Lewisohn's thinking lies in his misconception of Jewish 'otherness.' 'Otherness' denotes merely the otherness of a social and cultural entity, which is comparable to the otherness which human personalities reveal. Essentially, the ideals of the Jewish people are, at their best, identical with the ideals of the best in all other civilizations."

To our mind, Rabbi Eisenstein errs in implying that Jewish distinctiveness is exhausted in this "otherness," since all civilizations at their best cherish the same ideals. Today more than ever we need not be reminded that civilizations, like men, do not live at their best but often are closer to the other extreme. If all men lived up to their best, they would all be honorable, kindly and wise, and the difference between any two would be that of entity or "otherness." Men, however, are not all ideal, and they differ radically in quality or "unlikeness" as well. Prof. Kaplan explicitly recognizes that Jewish distinctiveness has two aspects, when he says—"The task now before the Jew is to save the otherness of Jewish life; the element of unlikeness will take care of itself." ("Judaism As a Civilization," p. 178).

III

At all events, Jewish civilization does differ in content and not merely in entity from other existent civilizations. The sources of this difference are to be sought not in biology but in sociology. Fifty years ago, James Darmsteter wrote: "The so-called national traits which may be observed among a people are due not to the accident of race but to tradition. Common surroundings, common aims, and common struggles develop mental traits more effectively than descent from common ancestors."

Jewish ideals, like that of any other people, are the result of a specific group experience, or *history,* crystallized and transmitted by *tradition.* For two thousand years, the Jew was deprived of the opportunity, and so he lost the taste for violence and bloodshed. His fate associated him with the oppressed and downtrodden, and therefore fired him with a passionate hatred of injustice. He was scattered throughout the world, and thus the seeds of an international outlook were sown in him. Einstein is said to have remarked, "Thank God I belong to a small people that has not been strong enough to do much harm in the world." Physical weakness and insignificance have characterized the Jewish people from its beginnings and undoubtedly have helped to confer upon it some of its most distinctive traits.

Once acquired, these impulses were perpetuated among the coming generations not by the bloodstream but by tradition, by the educative process. This process had many aspects. It was begun in the home, continued through formal schooling in youth and maintained by life-long study. Through the reading of the Torah and the homilies in the synagogue, the performance of religious rites and, above all, the celebration of the festivals, each Jew experienced vicariously the history of his people. Each generation felt the truth of

the Torah's statement, "Not with our fathers has the Lord made this covenant but with us, even us, who are all alive this day," and accepted the ideals of its people as its own.

When it is recognized that all group ideals are sociologically and not biologically inherited, it becomes clear that no impassable gulf yawns between Jew and Christian. Jewish teachings have been disseminated in the non-Jewish world, and Jewish culture has been immeasurably fructified by contact with a Gentile environment. As a result there is a great body of common ideals, where the difference is merely one of entity and not of quality.

IV

Yet, in spite of all the avenues of mutual influence, a substantial degree of unlikeness between Jewish and non-Jewish attitudes and practices still exists. Call it an accident if you will, the fact remains that these Jewish ideals, which have not yet been accepted or implemented in modern civilization, are concerned with the gravest issues confronting mankind today. In its approach to such problems as war and peace, internationalism, social reconstruction and personal morality, Jewish tradition possesses a distinctive character, as compared with other civilizations.

Thus Ahad Ha-Am and Anatole France both hated war, but the process by which they arrived at this position differed radically, because of the history of their respective peoples, as embodied in their cultural tradition. Ahad Ha-Am had merely to reaffirm the Jewish attitude implanted by the Prophets and Sages, and tragically emphasized by two thousand years of Jewish suffering. Anatole France, on the contrary, had to overcome the ultra-patriotic and militaristic bias of a typical French schooling, and deny an important segment of his spiritual inheritance to become a pacifist.

Moreover, Ahad Ha-Am and Anatole France are not typical examples but highly exceptional products of their people. The masses of men lack the capacity to swim against the current of their group aspirations. They tend to accept the ideals and practices of their civilization as normative.

Thus, the traditionally nurtured Jew has a deep horror of war. The normally educated Frenchman may not like its dangers and tragedies but will be much more easily persuaded of its glory. One has merely to contrast such national heroes as Johanan ben Zakkai and Napoleon to see that the difference is real.

War is so obviously an evil that nearly all civilizations repudiate it, or at least, deprecate it. Consider, however, the role of modern nationalism. Undoubtedly, many high-minded Germans conceive of it as the cooperative enterprise of all groups contributing their share to the cultural richness of the world. But to achieve this plane of vision, these German idealists must oppose doctrines espoused by their people today, which rest upon the teachings of von Hartmann, Treitschke, Chamberlain, and others. The Jew, on the other hand, finds the main lines of his attitude implicit in prophetic teaching, and he has merely to affirm, where his non-Jewish brother must all too often reject in toto. When fascism raised its head in Italy it could point to Caesar and the Roman Empire. Nazism drew upon pagan and barbarian elements of folk experience for its strength. But when Revisionism sought to introduce a parallel type of nationalism into the Jewish body politic, it was patently a foreign importation, alien to Jewish experience, outlook and tradition.

The world today is gripped by a widespread opposition to economic injustice. Nevertheless, there is a passion for social righteousness among Jews that has given them an outstanding and disproportionate share in the battle for human betterment. From the days of the Prophets to the present, the Jew has been the victim of persecution and oppression, either in his own person, or vicariously, through the history of his people. That experience was kept vividly before him by his tradition—

"Thou shalt not oppress the stranger, for ye know the soul of the stranger, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."

It is true that Jewish tradition has no practical program for meeting the economic and social problem of our day, having been formulated in earlier periods. Nevertheless, in the Pentateuchal ordinances for the prevention of exploitation and monopoly, in the prophetic excoriation of oppression and injustice, and in the reverence for the human personality reflected in rabbinic literature, the Jew has an unbroken tradition of social justice, without parallel elsewhere, that has served to keep the passion for a reconstructed society aflame in his heart.

To turn to another aspect of modern life, the Jew and the Christian are both seeking a rational sex ethic. To achieve this goal, the modern Christian must renounce not merely some unimportant extremist or obscure fanatic in his tradition, but the very fountain-head of Christianity, St. Paul. He must reject Paul's classic denunciation of the sexual impulse as evil and his glorification of the ascetic ideal. Mrs. Pearl Buck, who served as a missionary for many years in China, and surely cannot be accused of a wilful misunderstanding of the Christian heritage, writes in her most recent book that she hates St. Paul for the influence his doctrine had upon the life of her parents.

The Jew who strives after a rational sex behavior will also find much in medieval Jewish tradition that is other-worldly and ascetic in character. But when he turns to the great creative epochs of the Jewish spirit, to the pages of the Bible and the Talmud, he finds the fundamental attitudes that can serve his present needs and aspirations.

On most of the basic concerns of the day, the modern Jew can affirm his tradition, and thus maintain Jewish distinctiveness, which is not merely a difference of entity, but a distinction in quality.

V

Not being biological in character, the Jewish heritage is not transmitted automatically like the animal instincts, but is dependent for its preservation upon education in its broadest sense. A well-conceived and integrated program for Jewish living is essential, if these ideals are to function effectively in the Jewish community and the world as a whole.

If Judaism is to evoke the loyalty of the modern Jew, it must be brought home to him that it is more than another version of the same body of ideals that he can find elsewhere. He must be convinced that Judaism offers him the means to a richer and more satisfying life, because it contains certain elements, lacking in other civilizations, either in whole or in part, in content or in emphasis. This is not merely the proper psychological approach in order to arouse and maintain Jewish loyalty; it is validated by the facts.

Moreover, this affirmation of Jewish distinctiveness will serve the larger purposes of humanity as well. It is an ancient Jewish hope that the day will come "when the Lord will be one and his Name one," when the great human ideals will be shared alike by all men, and civilizations will differ from one another in entity and not in quality. We minister to that great goal the more effectively, if we recognize that it has not yet been achieved, and that the unique quality of Jewish ideals is not a figment of the imagination, but the specific contribution that the Jewish people still has to make to the world.